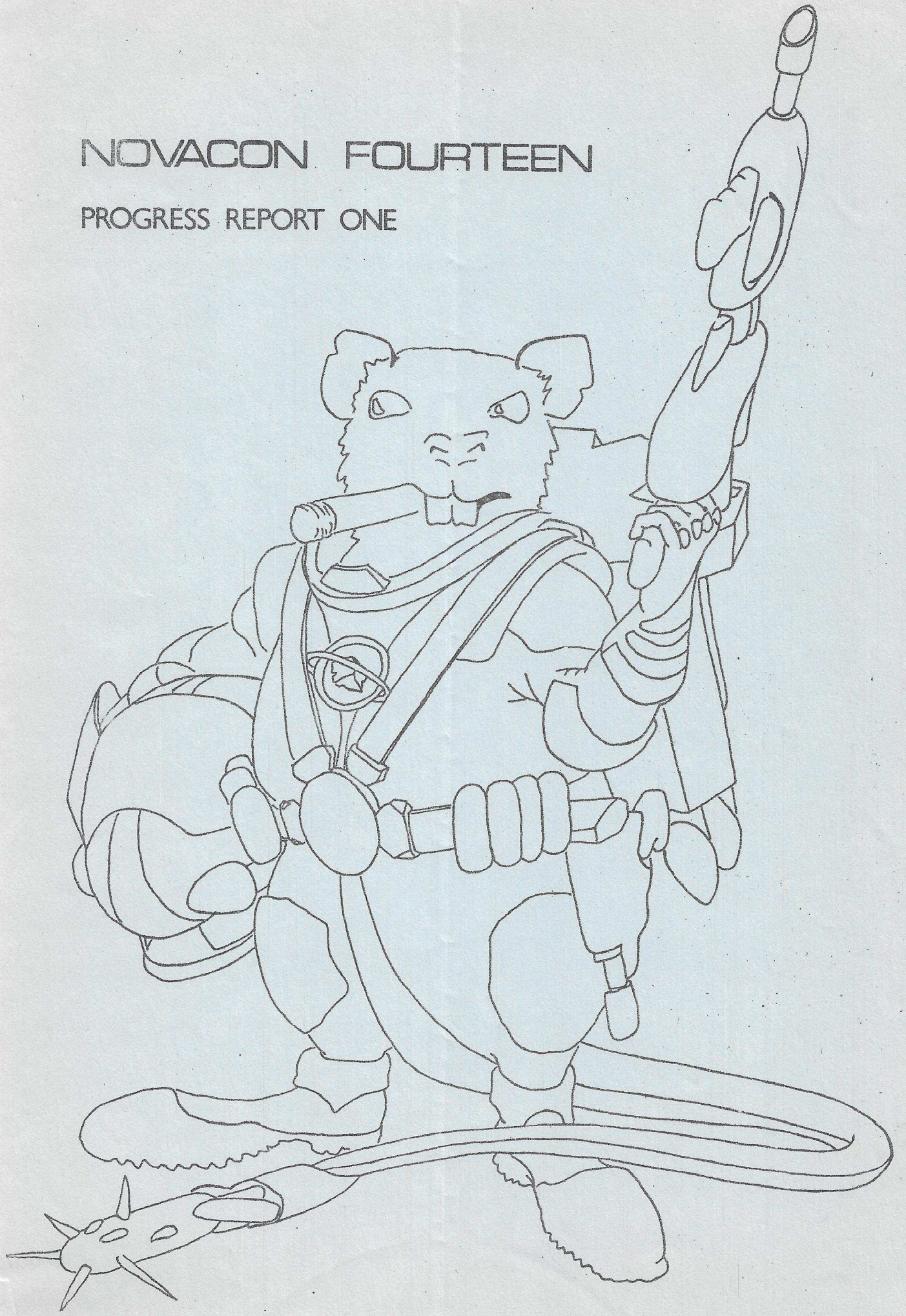
NOVACON FOURTEEN

PROGRESS REPORT ONE



NOVACON FOURTEEN PROGRESS REPORT ONE

Ex-Chairman's Hot Waffles

I bet you all thought you had heard the last from me and my Hot Waffles. In fact, so did I! But no, this year's chairman Steve Green used a new tactic to get me to write this. He dognapped Zoltan. "Write summit for PR1 or you will never see this dog again." I hadn't the heart to tell him Zoltan was only a drawing, so I gave in. Yet what was I to write about? What qualifications did I have? "You were chairman last year, that's good enough. Remember I still have your dog," Steve snarled. Quite clearly Steve was taking his job very seriously.

I remember Novacon 13 as if it were only three months ago. In fact it was only three months ago (I wondered why I was still having nightmares). Yet some things stay in my memory fresh as ever. Like on the Monday morning when two of the hotel's cleaning staff came out of the lift on the second floor and sniffed the air.

"This place smells like a brewery," the first said.

"Naw. A brewery smells better than this place.

And from my own experience from working in a brewery they were right. I recently found out that the Royal Angus has now taken the unusual measure of sending the cleaning to Sellafield. I always thought some of the beer was rough!

What I enjoyed most about that weekend was seeing the faces of the hotel staff go through varying degress of expression as they came upon new extremes of fannishness. Such as the Mexicon party on the Saturday night in the lower Angus. I'm told the manager was thinking of contacting the Guiness Book of Records to try and get a figure on how many people were down there that night. Even now fans are still being found pressed against the wall.

From what I can remember of that weekend, there was an awful lot of beer going round. Far more than usual. In fact, there were an awful lot of things going on all over the place. Which gave rise to one comment: "I didn't think you could over-programme a Novacon."

All of which brings me to this year's shindig. (After all, I do have to get Zoltan back). Yet I am not here to tell you how wonderful, super, great, terrific Novacon 14 will be. So I won't. What I will tell you is that knowing this year's committee, they will want to make this Novacon as good, if not better, than any other. Mercifully I am not involved, so this is the very last you will get from me.

Look, Steve, do I have to go on? Can't I have Zoltan back now? Please.....

Phill Probert

"Who are you?" "The new Number Two.."

Well, since Phill has copped out on telling you how wonderful, super, etcetera Novacon 14 will be, I guess the task is left to me. But do I honestly have to tell you all what an excellent guest of honour we have in Rob Holdstock, whose dual nationality as both fan and pro makes him a doubly relevant speaker? Or discuss at length the superb facilities now offered through our change of venue from the Royal Angus to the Grand? Or even blow our own trumpet by mentioning the £1 reduction in membership costs achieved by massive cuts in our progress report printing bills?

I'd rather take this opportunity to pick up Phill's gauntlet and promise you the best ever Novacon - and after 13, that's no idle boast. Also to thank all those who helped make that such a successful con, to Kev Dixon for our front cover mascot "Buck Rodent" and to Linda Pickersgill for her conrep, to Phill and Rob for their contributions, and last - but by no means least - those who have already signed up for Novacon 14. Everyone else will find the details at the back of this progress report. Look forward to seeing you all at the con.

Steve Green

THE VENUE

A renovated Victorian hotel dating back to 1876, the Grand Hotel is just five minutes' walk from New Street Station and twenty minutes' drive from the Birmingham International Airport and rail station complex.

The main convention hall will be the historic Grosvenor Suite, once described by the Poet Laureate, Sir John Betjeman, as "unique and superbly beautiful". Seating 450 with ease, the Grosvenor is backed onto by the massive Barwick Room, which will act as the main convention bar and ground floor lounge. A cheap food facility will be laid on by the Grand, but for those with a taste for more lavish meals, the ground floor also houses the city's justifiably reknowned Carvers Table and Penny Black restaurants and bars, offering good food, fine wines and excellent value for money. Alternatively, all rooms include tea and coffee making facilities, and a 24-hour snack service.

The remaining convention facilities will be housed on the mezzanine floor, one flight above (a lift is available for disabled members): the massive artshow gallery, art deco room, fan lounge (with its own bar and display/meeting space for groups or sf con committees ; anyone interested should contact Kev Clarke at 438, Station Road, Dorridge, Solihull (please include an s.a.s.e.)) and book room.

The fan lounge will <u>not</u> follow the established "fan lounge" format ; this would be inappropriate at a convention as overtly fannish as Novacon. Nor will it feature a formal alternate programme, such as was run at Novacon 13. Rather, it will act as a meeting place for old friends and new acquaintances alike, a forum for informal discussion and an introduction to sf fandom for those attending their first convention. Not to mention the venue for innumerable parties, of course.

Also on the mezzanine floor will be the convention's creche, a new feature at Novacon and one we are certain will be welcomed by parents and fellow fans alike. Anyone interested in making use of this facility should contact Ann Green at 11, Fox Green Crescent, Acocks Green, Birmingham, as soon as possible.

The Grand Hotel has 145 bedrooms, totalling 249 beds ; overflow facilities will be organised at the nearby Midland Hotel if necessary. Booking forms will be issued with the second progress report in April.

We have negotiated a single room rate of £15 per night ; this is identical to that at the Royal Angus last year and less than half the Grand's normal tariff. All twin/double rooms will be rated at £30.

THE ARTSHOW

One of the highlights of any Novacon is the artshow, a showcase for the talents of professional artists and fans as well as a preview for the popular art auction. As at Novacon 13, the artshow will be organised by fellow artist Dave Haden ; the major difference will be the venue - the Coronation Room, more than 1,400 sq.ft. of floor-space (132 sq.metres).

Artists wishing to exhibit should contact Dave at Shottery P.O. & Stores, Shottery, nr. Stratford-on-Avon, listing the total space required and any special needs.

NOTE: All exhibits entered by non-professional artists will qualify for our annual art competition, to be judged by our guest of honour, Rob Holdstock. Full details in the next progress report.

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*** OUR GUEST OF HONOUR     ***
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These are the lies that are told about me.

By the time of the convention I shall be thirty six years of age. I was born in a damp, dismal house that stood so deeply on the Romney Marsh of Kent that it was in the Romney Marsh. My earliest memory is of an invasion of small frogs into the kitchen, which caused much hysteria. My brother, a mere mewling infant, ate one. These days I expect similar behaviour from my adult friends, for I am, indeed ...

A fan! My first convention was Bristol, '67. I knew nobody when I arrived. I knew nobody when I left. I had been as popular as a wart on a beauty queen's bum. I've only missed one Novacon (through being broke and depressed) and to me they're the highlight of the year. My fannish activities -- I was an original Ratfan -- began with producing a fiction fanzine, Macrocosm, which ran stories by several people who went on to become very famous. In other fields. Later, with Welsh Optimist and Wellie-Boot Specialist Chris Evans (a fellow Celt), I edited Focus for the BSFA. And did no other work. And got broke and depressed.

Before this, however, I read zoology and parasitology at Bangor University, North Wales. Good honours, long since reduced to the point of uselessness. I specialised in tropical worms of human beings at the London School of Hygiene, attained an MSc, but quit my PhD in disgust at the number of cats I was made to dissect. Only eighty a year! Others were savaging hundreds.

1976: year of Holdstock the professional layabout. And writer. Produced fifteen books between '76 and '81. Fifteen more in the last two years. Reason? Sad but mutual break-up of marriage, followed by sudden panic. No steady money coming in any more (something I'd overlooked). Nervewracked, hysterical, furniture destroyed by head, nails chewed to elbows, etc. So pulled finger out and went out and made work for myself. Biggest deal of my career signed with Arrow Books: a series of occult novels, NIGHT HUNTER. These have been keeping me going for two years, and almost certainly a third.

Seem to spend a lot of time collaborating with Malcolm Edwards. Can't understand why. We are now preparing our fifth illustrated tome, a follow up to REALMS OF FANTASY and ALIEN LANDSCAPES. Our book MAGICIAN was a monumental flop. Also, with the same boy, am halfway through a script for an interactive theatre production (sf) for a Canadian concern.

Big moment of 1984, for me, the publication of MYTHAGO WOOD (the novel) coming from Gollancz in July.

MY WORK: The True Facts

Science Fiction:	EYE AMONG THE BLIND (Faber)		1976
	EARTHWIND (Faber)		1977
	WHERE TIME WINDS BLOW (Faber)		1981
	IN THE VALLEY OF THE STATUES (Faber, collection)		1982
	NECROMANCER (Futura)		1978
	MYTHAGO WOOD (Gollancz, forthcoming)		1984
As Robert Faulcon:	NIGHT HUNTER: THE STALKING	1983	(Arrow, occult)
	" : THE TALISMAN	1983	
	" : THE GHOST DANCE	1983	
	" : THE SHRINE	1984	
As Chris Carlsen:	BERSERKER: SHADOW OF THE WOLF	1977	(Sphere, historical fantasy)
	" : THE BULL CHIEF	1978	
	" : THE HORNED WARRIOR	1979	
As Richard Kirk:	RAVEN, SWORDMISTRESS OF CHAOS		(Corgi, fantasy)
	" : TIME OF GHOSTS	1978	
	" : LORDS OF THE SHADOWS	1979	

/// continued overpage ///

As Steven Eisler:	SPACE WARS, WORLDS AND WEAPONS	1979	
	THE ALIEN WORLD	1980	(Octopus, ill.)
With Malcolm Edwards:	ALIEN LANDSCAPES	1979	(Pierrot, ill.)
	TOUR OF THE UNIVERSE	1980	(Pierrot)
	MAGICIAN	1982	(Dragonsworld,
	REALMS OF FANTASY	1983	illustrated)
Novelisations:	LEGEND OF THE WEREWOLF (film)	1978	(Sphere)
	THE SATANISTS (film)	1980	(Futura)
	THE PROFESSIONALS #10,13-15 (tv)		(Sphere)
	BULMAN (tv)	1984	(Futura)

Plus 36 stories published from F&SF to AD ASTRA, SF MONTHLY to ANDROMEDA, VORTEX to STOPWATCH, to ARIES, to FRIGHTENERS, to PAN HORROR, to NEW WRITINGS IN SF, etc, etc.

There is more, of course, but no one will ever know what !

Rob Holdstock

//(And now for something completely different: a view of last year's Novacon by Linda Pickersgill, voted the fan most welcome on a desert island at the last Silicon as well as a strong contender for the fan-writing Nova Award..//

CONNED INTO A CONREP

There I was, standing at the Cymrucon bar, wondering why I was at another con so soon after the atomic-blast-to-the-brain known as Novacon 13, when up walked Martin Tudor, Birmingham's latest fan-on-the-go, handing out flyers for Novacon 14 already. These fans-on-the-go don't fool around and waste time. I focussed my eyes on the print: da da da Novacon 14, da da Robert Holdstock guest of honour, hmm hmm hmm Grand Hotel, doo doo doo dee con report by Linda Pickersgill. Huh ?

I tugged on Martin's sleeve and pointed to my name. "What's this then, eh ?" "That's a Novacon 14 flyer," reported the smart ass fan-on-the-go. "No, no. My name. Why is my name there next to the words 'con report by...' ?" "Oh, that's because Steve said you'd agreed to write a report on how triffic Novacon 13 was for our progress report. Don't you remember ?" I didn't remember. I cast my feeble memory back to the event of only two weeks previous and tried to remember said agreement with Mr. Green.

The first primal memory which surfaced was that of dancing. Seemed like I danced all weekend long: the Barn Dance, the Drum Group and Mexicon parties, the People's Disco on Sunday night in the disused book room, not to mention all the general bebopping in room parties. No, I would have remembered if someone had tried to interupt my special display of thrust and wiggle boogey with questions about con reports. Could he have asked during a panel ? Not during Lisa Tuttle's guest of honour speech, nor during any of the other programmed panels. It wasn't during any of the silly games or quizzes in the alternate program room either, 'cause Steve was far too busy hosting those events to bother with trivial talk about con reports. Could it have been during a film ? Nah, a dumb place to hold a conversation. What about over breakfast ? Forget it. I only made it to breakfast once this year. Despite my love of the Great English Breakfast I'm afraid that the long days and even longer nights jam-packed with meeting people, sitting in on panels and dance dance dancing didn't leave much time for the vital necessities and in the long run I chose sleeping over eating.

Unable to figure it out I turned back to the Cymrucon bar and ordered a brandy to help get the old synapses working. The bar ! That's it ! He must have cornered me in the bar sometime. I certainly spent a lot of time there drinking with friends I hadn't seen in a year, meeting new people, watching all the faces come and go as the Con-Circus carried on. I bet he forced a drink in my hand then asked me real

sweet: "Linda, I'd love to have you do a con report for me." Oooooo. The little sneak. Hitting me at a weak moment when I was having so much fun I'd have agreed to writing anything. In a huff I turned to Martin and pointed my brandy at him. "You just tell that Steve Green what he did was unfair. He knew what a good time I was having. And he knew just how to catch me in a good enough mood to promise to write triffic things. You just tell him to call me. I want to know when he asked me to write this report." Somewhat baffled by the brandy sloshed down the front of his shirt, Martin dutifully agreed to pass the message on.

Back home, as soon as enough time had passed for me to forget the whole incident yet again, I got a phone call from Steve. "Will you have that con report ready for me soon?" It all came rushing back. "Uh, yeah, Steve... Uh, exactly when did we agree that I would write this report? 'Cause to tell the truth I really don't remember. Was it at the Royal Angus bar? Huh? I bet it was in the bar. Or was it at the Nova Award presentation? Or during the 'Neo' play? Or at the Dead Dog party? Or....." "I didn't ask you about it at Novacon, Linda." "....at the beer tasting party? Or the book auction? Or the.....huh? What did you say?" "I said that it wasn't at Novacon that I asked you to write a con report for the progress report." I was thrown for a complete loop. Not only had I forgotten him asking me to write, but I was totally off when the asking took place. "Well then, when? I mean, where? Where and when?" "Don't you remember the conversation we had last August about Novacon?" "Uh, yes. I think so." I was lying. "Well, I said then that I'd like you to write a con report on Novacon 13 for our progress reports to Novacon 14." "And I said yes?" "Uh huh." "Well, I guess... I mean, well yeah. Right. I see...." I was trying to bluff my way around the inevitable next line. "Then you'll have the report to me in two weeks, OK? Thanks a lot, Linda. Bye."

Oooooo. What a sneak. I'll get you for this this, Steve Green.

//(Rumours that a certain Friends in Space veteran has put out a contract on an unnamed convention chairman are, of course, entirely untrue...)//


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Despite what some of you may have read in recent issues of Dave Langford's excellent (if not always 100 percent accurate) newszine Ansible, Novacon 14's dates remain the second weekend of November (ending in the wee small hours of Monday, for those who want to book their 24-hour flu or food poisoning early), and the main bar is anything but "small, closed, poky" (1400+ sq.ft). The correct COFF address appears overpage.

Special thanks to Vin Clarke for his efforts in electrostencilling the front cover.

The next issue will be out April, all contributions welcome at the address on the back page.

Membership update (as at 22.1.84):

9. Phill Probert
10. Vin Clarke
109. Mark Brantingham

THE COMMITTEE

Steve Green (Chairman):
Ran the alternative programming at Novacon 13, which included such dubious spectacles as normally sane fans pouring pints of beer over their own heads and downing brews best reserved for de-greasing the waste disposal ; entered fandom circa '74 and has edited numerous fanzines since ; founder member of the British APA, Apa-B and the Solihull SF Group ; BSFA committee 1981-.

Martin Tudor (Vice-Chairman, Programming):
Founder member of the Britain in '87 worldcon bid following shelving of the earlier '89 bid ; several fanzines to his credit, including one for Apa-B ; his contacts in the Post Office may ensure these progress reports arrive intact.

Paul Vincent (Treasurer):
Fanzine editor and yet another member of the Apa-B underground ; with Martin and Steve, founded the abandoned '89 worldcon bid ; ran Novacon 13's varied and highly-applauded film programme.

Ann Green (Registrations):
Entered fandom through the Welsh rock fanzine Cygnet Committee, following up on this with appearances at the Solihull and Birmingham Groups ; "wonderful, charming, witty, eloquent and modest" (A.Green).

Eunice Pearson (Co-Editor, Novacon publications):
Yet another Apa-B veteran, as well as a member of the Women's Periodical Team ; current editor of the Birmingham SF Group's monthly newsletter ; edits a personalzine as well as the fiction fanzine Calaban ; ran the registrations desk at Novacon 12 and co-edited Novacon 13's progress reports and programme book with chairman Phill Probert (the partnership was further consolidated at their local register office on December 21) ; Eunice will be responsible for the 'fanzine' style of future progress reports.

Dave Haden (Artshow):
Ran Novacon 13's artshow and designed the cover artwork for all the con's publications, as well as supplying numerous illustrations ; British APA veteran entering sf fandom around three years ago.

Kev Clarke (Fan Programming):
Founder member of both the Solihull and Exeter SF Groups, serving on the former's Microcon in '82 ; ran the damper sections of Novacon 13's alternative programme ; the 'brains' behind the evil COFF Award (see below).

THE AWARDS

Two major fannish awards are presented each year at Novacon. The first is the Nova, awarded in three categories: best fanzine, best writer and best artist ; all votes are cast by active fans. In 1983 the winners were Dave Bridges, whose work in the superb fanzine A Cool Head gained him both the writer's and editor's Nova, and Margaret Welbank, who received the artist's Nova. Full voting details will be given in the final progress report by the award's new administrator, Paul Vincent.

The second, more light-hearted, is COFF, the Concrete Overcoat Fan Fund. This dubious 'honour', founded and administered by Kevin Clarke, is bestowed upon the fan most deserving of a concrete overcoat and a swim in the nearest canal. Previous recipients have been Bob (Fake) Shaw and Simon Polley ; votes are 10p each, with proceeds split between the TransAtlantic Fan Fund and Get Under Fan Fund, founded to foster international fan contact. Votes can be cast at Novacon 14, at major UK cons where a COFF table is set up, or via Kevin himself at: 438 Station Road, Dorridge, Solihull, West Midlands.

NOVACON 14 REGISTRATIONS

1. Rob Holdstock
2. Steve Green
3. Martin Tudor
4. Ann Green
5. Eunice Pearson
6. Paul Vincent
7. Dave Haden
8. Kevin Clarke
11. Joy Hibbert
12. Dave Rowley
13. Allan Boyd-Newton
14. Charles Mawdsley
15. John Styles
16. Margaret Austin
17. Martin Easterbrook
18. Steve Davies
19. Bob Shaw (Glasgow)
20. T.M. Henir
21. Chris Southern
22. Jenny Southern
23. S. Booth
24. J. Sheward
25. K.H. Allan
26. George Ternent
27. Linda Bagler
28. Helen Eling
29. Stan Eling
30. Mickey Poland
31. Dai Price
32. Roger Robinson
33. Johnathon Cowie
34. Tim Illingworth
35. Katie Hoare
36. Martin Hoare
37. Roger Perkins
38. Owen Whiteoak
39. Alex Stewart
40. Dave Symes
41. Fay Symes
42. Andrew Hall
43. Martin Stallard
44. Tony Rogers
45. Bernie Evans
46. Maureen Porter
47. Colin Fine
48. Marcus Rowland
49. Caroline Mullan
50. James Steel
51. Kathy Westhead
52. Mike Westhead
53. Peter Tyers
54. Chris Davenport
55. Peter Wareham
56. Animal
57. Brian Ameringen
58. Duncan Booth
59. Paul Stewart
60. Pam Wells
61. Roy Macinski
62. Dave Ellis
63. Eric Bentcliffe
64. Katie Davies (D)
65. Joyce Slater
66. Ken Slater
67. Christine Dewis
68. Edward Ward
69. Jack Cohen
70. Martin Smith
71. Urban Gunnarsson
72. Marion Van Der Voort
73. Richard Van Der Voort
74. Rory McLean
75. Rog Peyton
76. Bruce MacDonald
77. Mike Damesick
78. Mike Walshe
79. John Wilkes
80. Ye Gerbish
81. John Paul Smit
82. Larry Van Der Putte
83. Harry Bell
84. Rob Hansen
85. Ken Worrall
86. Peter Worrall
87. Sue Worrall
88. Greg Pickersgill
89. Linda Pickersgill
90. Howard Rosenblum
91. June Rosenblum
92. Gwen Funnell
93. James White
94. Peggy White
95. Paul Dormer
96. John Steward
97. Pete Weston
98. Kev Williams
99. Sue Williams
100. Phil Barnard
101. Alan Dorey
102. Rochelle Dorey
103. Andrew Stephenson
104. Lesley Ward
105. Tony Berry
106. Dave Wood
107. Simon Rudyk (D)
108. Barbara Rudyk (D)

Memberships listed as at 1.1.84 ; all are attending memberships except those marked (D), which are valid for Saturday attendance only but can be converted to full attending on payment of a further £2.50.

Memberships will be available on the door at £7, but further progress reports will only be mailed out to those who take out attending membership NOW.

See page two for full membership details.

GOPHERS

The success of a convention depends as much on the contribution of the behind-the-scenes brigade as the committee itself, and Novacon is no exception. Even if the task in question is one as simple as re-arranging chairs or transporting equipment from the car park to the main hall, your help could easily prove a vital element in the effectiveness of this year's programming. It's a lot of fun, too.

Anyone interested in joining Novacon 14's team of gophers (rewards not in Heaven but at the bar) should write to vice-chairman Martin Tudor at: 845, Alum Rock Road, Ward End, Birmingham.

NOVACON FOURTEEN

Guest of Honour:
ROBERT HOLDSTOCK

Venue:
THE GRAND HOTEL, BIRMINGHAM

Dates:
NOVEMBER 9 - 11, 1984

Attending Membership:
SIX POUNDS

Convention Committee:
STEVE GREEN, MARTIN TUDOR, PAUL VINCENT, ANN GREEN, EUNICE PEARSON, DAVE HADEN, KEVIN CLARKE.

Room Rate:
FIFTEEN POUNDS PER PERSON

Inquiries:

Membership: 11, Fox Green Crescent, Acocks Green, B'ham 27.
Artshow: Shottery P.O. & Stores, Shottery, Nr. Stratford-on-Avon.
Programme: 845, Alum Rock Road, Ward End, B'ham.
Fan Lounge: 438, Station Road, Dorridge, Solihull, W.M.
Con Creche: As for membership.

printed on the gutter press

NOVACON 14 PROGRESS REPORT ONE

PRINTED MATTER : REDUCED RATE

If undelivered, please return to:
11, Fox Green Crescent, Acocks Green,
Birmingham, B27 7SD, England.

12p

BIRMINGHAM 9 FEB 1984

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